

# *The Fair Elena*



*P. E. Gilman*



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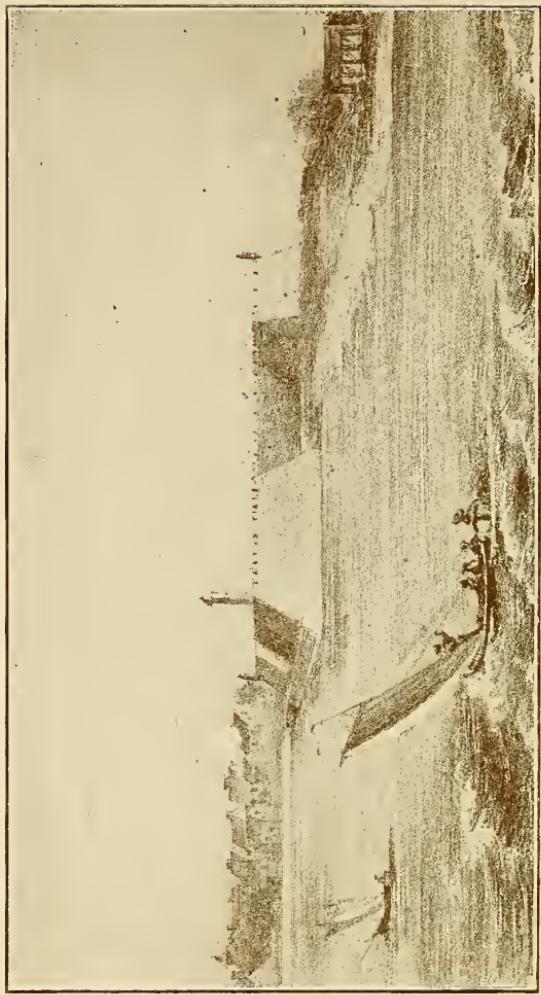


## THE FAIR ELENA

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FORT MARION, ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA.

# THE FAIR ELENA

A Legend of the Old Fort  
at St. Augustine

BY

J. E. GILMAN



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No. 1.

THE FAIR ELENA



## THE FAIR ELENA

OH! summer land, upon thy shores,  
the sea  
Unstinted casts its treasures, bound-  
less, free,  
And gently woos with many a soft  
caress,  
In blandishment of murmured gentle-  
ness,  
Then rageful, foaming, towers with  
savage roar  
In angry passion, beating at thy door,  
Only to sink again, appeased with  
smiles—  
From thy fair land, and verdure-  
crowned isles,  
Now suppliant rests caressing at thy  
feet,

## THE FAIR ELENA

With rippling waves, in cooing kisses  
sweet,  
And decked with glowing tints and  
colors warm,  
In close embrace receives thy radiant  
form.  
Fair flower land! the realm of lotus  
dreams,  
Romance in all thy varied history  
gleams—  
And gilds each page with ventures  
strange and bold  
Of knightly search for conquest, and  
for gold,  
A gorgeous pageantry of burnished  
arms,  
Of sieges, sorties, ruthless war's  
alarms,  
Of pirates' raid, and bandit bucca-  
neer,  
And valorous deeds of mailed cav-  
alier

## THE FAIR ELENA

Through trembling swamp or lethal  
everglade,  
By labyrinthine paths no hand has  
made,  
The stealthy Indian glides with noise-  
less tread,  
And shadows cross the page, in flam-  
ing red.  
Yet o'er the ruined cot and broken  
form  
The creeping vine has laid its mantle  
warm.  
To legendary tales the deed consigns,  
And time's effacing hand has dimmed  
the lines.

Oh, queenly land! Enthroned on sum-  
mer seas,  
How many nations, suitors at thy  
knees,  
Have woven fair the richly bannered  
page

## THE FAIR ELENA

And claimed thy realm as richest  
heritage?  
De Soto's hosts entwine with lillied  
France,  
With these combine De Leon's sad  
romance,  
And England's lion banners wave  
amain,  
With close companioned lion flag of  
Spain,  
Till Freedom's starry ensign rules se-  
rene,  
The standard of thy throne, thou  
mighty Queen.  
And merged in sisterhood among the  
States,  
Art guardian charged to keep these  
southern gates.  
Oh! Land mid summer seas, in em-  
eralds drest,  
To dwell within thy realm is blissful  
rest.

## THE FAIR ELENA

There closely twined in warmth of  
Nature's heart,  
And flower crowned, with all her  
choicest art,  
Are fragrant groves, with white and  
gold o'erlaid,  
That laughing, bear the fruit the sun  
has made  
In likeness of himself. The golden  
globes,  
The jewelled ornaments upon thy  
robes,  
Are regal gifts thy bounty sends to  
all,  
Like benedictions shed, where'er they  
fall.  
There mango groves with tangled  
roots of trees,  
Like serpents, fold on fold, some prey  
to seize,  
Yet sheltering refuge give their  
domes within

## THE FAIR ELENA

To myriad tribes of elves with glittering fin,  
Or safe, when falls the night in darkness deep,  
Protects the homing birds in perfect sleep.  
While springing clear, from caverned crystal deep,  
In joyous bounty sparkling leap,  
As Horeb's rock gushed forth at God's command,  
And generous, poured its blessing o'er the land,  
Thy bosomed springs pour forth, in very truth,  
In manifold—the living fount of youth.  
And over all thy tasseled, waving palms  
Majestic rear their heads through storms and calms

## THE FAIR ELENA

And bend in welcome to each wandering guest  
Of thy fair land—Florida—ever blest.

When trod the venturous foot amid the unknown lands,  
Hispania's armies proudly ruled Floridian strands—  
And reared a fortress strong, that should their hold retain  
Upon the realm they'd seized for Philip—King of Spain.  
Menendez then commander was, in fief of Rome,  
To free the land of heresy, and build a home.  
And by his king Adelantado made supreme  
Of all the Spanish main, and far beyond. A dream

## THE FAIR ELENA

Of glorious conquest — dazzling  
wealth—perchance to find  
That fount whose crystal wave in  
emerald bank enshrined  
Conferred immortal youth on him  
who did but drink,  
Unfailing source of life within its  
fabled brink.  
The standard of the cross he reared  
with fury's flame,  
And deeds of love like this he wrought  
in Christus' name  
With mailed arm, the grim old chief,  
his sword upraised,  
And slew some scores of heretics.  
“God's name be praised.”  
The gentle Indian, tamed with toil-  
some task and lash,  
Oft seamed his heathen hide with  
pike-inflicted gash,  
And thus the law of love and peace  
to him was shown,

## THE FAIR ELENA

And heaven was gained with many a  
tear and moan.  
He scuttled ships and hanged the  
crews, or prisoners sent,  
In irons bound, to Spain, for darker  
punishment  
Of churchly trial, torture-cell, *auto*  
*da fé*,  
In loving kindness burnt to grace  
some holy day.  
Through life his footprints stained  
the earth with blood;  
The Church assoiled his soul from  
crime's ensanguined flood  
For each atrocious deed—thanksgiv-  
ing mass, he said.  
A saint he lived and, blessed, died at  
last in bed—  
Don Pedro, dying, left behind the  
youthful town  
San Augustine—a star amid the  
jewelled crown

## THE FAIR ELENA

Of Spanish colonies—yet e'er he  
passed away  
The French, revengeful, armed, had  
made a swift foray,  
And burned the town and fort—bap-  
tized the land anew  
With human sacrifice, much as the  
heathen do.  
For being Christians made it right to  
slaughter all  
Of different creed, and so they slew  
both great and small.  
'Tis true that many innocent with  
them were slain,  
But God would know His own—and  
they were out of pain;  
'Twas but the past's libation poured  
from living bowls  
To greet the future's long account of  
murdered souls.  
The soil, enriched with copious dews  
of wine-red crime,

## THE FAIR ELENA

No doubt would harvest vintage great  
    in coming time  
Upon the site where France had  
    crushed Hispania's pride.  
King Philip planned redoubts anew,  
    well fortified  
With sturdy walls and ramparts, deep  
    embrasured front,  
With cannon grim and open mouthed  
    to bear the brunt  
Of direful siege or fierce attack of  
    warring foes;  
Portcullised gates that friends ad-  
    mit, all else oppose.  
A deep encircling moat glacis, a demi-  
    lune,  
To guard the port a bastioned curtain,  
    all rock hewn,  
“Each line with highest art and skill,”  
    so read the plan,  
As drawn by Spanish engineers, after  
    Vanban.

## THE FAIR ELENA

And now a hundred years have passed  
since first begun—  
A hundred years of toil beneath the  
burning sun,  
Of sullen convict-knaves brought here  
from other lands—  
Unwilling Indian serfs, controlled by  
iron hands,  
And captured men-at-arms, in igno-  
minious place,  
As slaves, to build a fort for men of  
alien race.  
Successive throngs have come and  
worn their lives away,  
Each stone cement with blood, as rose  
the fortress gray,  
A Lazar house of woe, if all the tale  
were told,  
Of cruel deeds to man—these hun-  
dred years of old.  
Now squarely grim, from rampart's  
foot to parapet,

## THE FAIR ELENA

The frowning walls are reared in  
place and firmly set,  
And proudly floats the silken folds in  
lordly laze  
Of blazoned banner, on its staff, amid  
the haze  
Of smoking incense from the sacred  
vessels flung,  
While mass is clamorous, voiced with  
cannon's brazen lung,  
For murder, war and all such arts  
must hallowed be  
With holy service of the church. By  
this set free,  
The veriest scoundrel of them all was  
justified  
To cut a throat or sack a town—with  
honest pride.  
And now the years glide on, with  
sometimes calls to arms  
And sometimes peace. And safe,  
when sounded war's alarm,

## THE FAIR ELENA

Within the sheltering fort the people  
of the town  
Awaited happier days. When war  
clouds ceased to frown  
Then came they forth, and built the  
ruined homes anew,  
And thankful were they'd lived the  
troublous period through.

One afternoon a fleet from Spain in  
close array  
Came slowly sailing up the winding  
Dolphin's Bay  
And cast the clanking anchor near  
San Marco's fort,  
That grim and frowning stood, de-  
fender of the port.  
On board the fleet, a new commander  
came from Spain,  
A lordly Don of high degree, and in  
his train

## THE FAIR ELENA

His fair young bride. A rose among  
Castilian flowers,  
The dew of youth scarce brushed  
from childhood's happy hours,  
A rose with opening lips, in wonder,  
at the world,  
Before unknown. But now its mys-  
teries, wide unfurled,  
Oppress and bruise the tender petals  
of the heart—  
For she unwilling was to wed—and  
torn apart  
From all her soul held dear, in mock-  
ery of vows  
Was forced to perjure self, and rank  
and wealth espouse,  
A captive vassal, in procession  
brought to swell  
His rank and state—thus she, poor  
maid in fetters fell,  
A chain invisible, that bound with  
strangling cord

## THE FAIR ELENA

Her future life, and borne in horror  
of her lord,  
For he was Alvarez, a grizzled, stern  
old knight,  
With features graved with scars, im-  
prints of many a fight;  
A face that long campaigns had  
bronzed to parchment hue,  
A crafty fox, and merciless—unused  
to sue—  
A born commander, quick to plan. An  
iron will,  
A tiger's thirst for blood if roused,  
instinct to kill,  
Unbending pride in birth. The line-  
age of his race  
To Adam's time, perhaps beyond,  
could backward trace,  
Sprung fungus-like—suspicion in his  
ready mind,  
And jealous doubts of wife, his friend,  
and all mankind,

## THE FAIR ELENA

A subtle poison, new distilled, sharp  
fanged with pain,  
Luxuriant thrived within his dark and  
scheming brain;  
The tiger wed with lamb! The hawk  
with dove is gyved,  
So Alvarez the fierce the fair Elena  
wived.

The sounding trumpet's ringing note  
broke on the ear,  
Re-echoed from the wood's green  
wall, and city near,  
While banners decked the rampart's  
front, and greeting gave  
As cannon roared in noisy salvos o'er  
the wave.  
Then flecked with barges many oared  
the placid bay,  
Transporting troops and stores from  
where the galleons lay,

## THE FAIR ELENA

And in procession marched toward  
the stern old fort.  
Don Alvarez, with sword and cross  
and all his court,  
With sounding shouts, and ringing  
cheers on every side,  
“Long live Don Alvarez, and bless-  
ings on his bride.”  
Thus opened wide the gates, to wel-  
come on the strand  
Don Alvarez of Spain—new gov-  
ernor of the land.

Loud rang the soldier’s laugh as fell  
the shades of night,  
And comrades greet old friends, as  
swiftly wings its flight  
From hand to hand the well-filled  
beaker on its rounds;  
While tinkling thrum of light guitar  
and merry sounds

## THE FAIR ELENA

Of mandolin and castanet the echoes  
    brought  
Of gala days in old Castile, with  
    pleasures fraught,  
And twice-told tales are heard of  
    'scapes by field and flood,  
And wondrous feats of arms 'mid  
    hecatombs of blood,  
Till evening hours were builded deep  
    in later night,  
And chapel bell and tap of drum ex-  
    tinguished light,  
And all was hushed save where some  
    wanderer vigil kept,  
And clanking, paced his measured  
    watch o'er those that slept;  
Or sounds from out the city streets,  
    while passing by—  
“Ave Marie Purissima,” the watch-  
    man’s cry.  
So closed the day, and night shone out  
    with myriad stars

## THE FAIR ELENA

Reflected in a thousand forms of  
gilded bars  
Upon the breast of tranquil waters,  
fast asleep—  
All still save gentle swell, the breath-  
ing of the deep.

The morning came, and with it fare-  
well message said,  
For home returning bound, the snowy  
sails are spread,  
And on old ocean's bosom borne, with  
favoring breeze,  
The galleons take their lengthened  
flight across the seas,  
While from the seaward wall the fair  
Elena viewed  
The parting ships with feelings deep  
of solitude.  
They linked her home in fair Castile  
with this unknown,

## THE FAIR ELENA

That home so far away, and she left  
here alone.  
The link was severed then that made  
her home seem near,  
These messengers returning there  
seemed doubly dear—  
And gazing out the lookout's tower  
till every trace  
Of fading sail was merged within the  
cloudland place,  
She still with straining eyes far dis-  
tant sought to gain  
A last fond look at those so soon to  
be in Spain.  
While visions o'er the watery waste  
before her smiled,  
A gleam of fairyland, where once she  
roamed, a child—  
And trod with lightsome foot the rose-  
strewn path, to hide,  
Or blithely danced in childish glee  
some friend beside.

## THE FAIR ELENA

And then Hernando's form in vision  
    seemed to rise,  
And all unconscious why, the fair  
    Elena sighs—  
Hernando, once her hero, king, her  
    playmate, friend,  
The child's ideal of youthful grace.  
    Pray heaven to send  
Those happy days once more, when  
    she was light and free,  
Before this storm cloud wafted her  
    beyond the sea.  
And then there came a shadowy sense  
    of coming ill,  
A gathering cloud of dread, that  
    gloomed with icy chill,  
A shivering thrill of fear, presenti-  
    ment that gave  
A shock, as when one treads unknow-  
    ing on his grave.  
And hastening, panic struck, adown  
    the tower stair,

## THE FAIR ELENA

She sought, as might a wounded doe,  
    its secret lair,  
And panting, reached the rude and  
    narrow casemate room.  
There, shuddering, turned, as one es-  
    caped some dreadful doom,  
And sobbed relief, in woman's pre-  
    cious refuge—tears—  
Till tired sleep erased the sense of all  
    her fears.  
Then in the visions of the night there  
    floated fair  
Hernando's form. And sounded on  
    the fragrant air  
His voice harmonious, tuned respon-  
    sive to her heart,  
And life once more was wreathed in  
    smiles, as far apart  
From waking hours as Paradise  
    from dungeon cell,  
The dismal place where morn con-  
    demned her still to dwell.

## THE FAIR ELENA

And thus began that weary time when  
moments seem  
As hours—and hours in lengthening  
stretch as in a dream,  
When time expands to years. A life  
compressed apace  
Within an instant's time, within a  
breathing space.  
Each present day as like the day that  
passed before,  
As wave resembles wave, in ripples  
on the shore.  
So, slowly moving down the stagnant  
stream of days,  
With naught of charm to mark their  
flight. And naught allays  
The thirst for home, with all its bliss  
and dear delight,  
As frequent these return to mind, in  
pictured sight.  
And oft she sat and gazed at eve far  
o'er the sea,

## THE FAIR ELENA

And watched with longing eyes the  
sea birds wheeling free,  
When through the filmy haze and  
slowly gathering night,  
In columned ranks, they whirled, and  
homeward took their flight.  
Not bound, as she, within the narrow,  
frowning walls,  
But ocean wide, to towering sky, were  
spread their halls.  
The very air within the fort its free-  
dom lost,  
In haste it sped without and fled, as  
tempest tost,  
With speedy wings, far o'er the land  
of whispering pines—  
So flee the angels fair from deep and  
dark designs.  
As victim held, and crushed within  
the hand of fate,  
Her weary spirit writhed, hopeless,  
disconsolate.

## THE FAIR ELENA

Her soul its pinions beat against the  
iron hand  
That marred her life, and all its for-  
mer pleasures banned.  
So slowly moved the hours, each  
lengthening day grew night,  
Each night gave lingering birth to  
morn—scarce marked the flight  
Of time, with aught beyond the daily  
tread-mill round—  
The clank of arms. Old ocean's mon-  
otone of sound—  
The outlined forest dark, with prison-  
ing bars of pine,  
That like an outer wall her prison  
doors confine,  
While seaward spread the bounded  
sky, dropped space  
That fettered sight within her dreary  
prison place.  
So sat she there, with hungry heart  
and longing eyes,

## THE FAIR ELENA

While landward rolled the foam-kissed waves that met her sighs  
And vainly searched the verge of ocean's distant rim  
Till night brought needed rest to weary eyes grown dim,  
And orang'd breathed the winds, in whispers low and sweet,  
Like visions brought her home and playmates at her feet.  
Thus melted day to day, in woeful discontent,  
Each hour a sigh, each wakeful night a long lament,  
Till wayward fate or subtle chance the curtain drew,  
Rekindled light in life, and comfort gave anew.  
For rumored wars made need, and new recruits from Spain  
Were sent, to surely hold this outpost on the main.

## THE FAIR ELENA

And with these troops Hernando  
came, unknowing, there,  
Within San Marco's frowning walls,  
    the lady fair  
Abiding place had found. He knew  
    that she was wed,  
And far removed from Spain. So  
    chance his footsteps led,  
And brought him to this far-off realm,  
    where face to face  
He met once more his childhood's  
    friend, so full of grace,  
A sweet surprise to each, when at the  
    journey's end  
To find upon this distant strand each  
    owned a friend.  
And in her soulful, sad and longing  
    eyes he read  
Unmeasured hours of loneliness, and  
    all the dread  
Those hours had stored of sickening  
    pain within her heart.

## THE FAIR ELENA

It moved his knightly soul to rise and  
rend apart  
The cankering thongs and rescue her  
from all her care.  
Her knight, her will in honor bound  
to do and dare,  
Content for any toil if haply he might  
gain  
A smile, to blossom new from out that  
look of pain.  
He cheery pranks would play and  
stratagems invent  
To charm away her grief and change  
to merriment.  
He searched the woodland's wealth  
for fairy ferns and flowers,  
He gathered store of shells, fresh  
plucked from coral bowers.  
The gems that, like a prodigal, the  
reckless sea  
Profusely cast upon the shore in joy-  
ous glee

## THE FAIR ELENA

Each day, some treasure rare, in color  
glowing, warm,  
Some wondrous marvel found of  
strangely fashioned form  
To glad her sight and gild an hour  
with sweet surprise  
At nature's handiwork unclosed to  
curious eyes.  
Then life grew strangely sweet. Each  
day, rose colored, spread  
The languid hours new flushed with  
life and banished dread,  
Save when her lord appeared, and  
then a rising fear  
That, shuddering, filled her soul while  
Alvarez was near.  
The sun shone in her heart when he  
was far away.  
His storm-cloud face obscured, when  
near, her brightest day;  
E'en then Hernando's voice would  
flood the lowering gloom

## THE FAIR ELENA

With golden sunset hues. Anew her  
life would bloom,  
And she, poor soul, ne'er had a  
thought or dream of harm,  
No transient sense to either came that  
might alarm,  
That nesting in their hearts was  
friendship grown to love,  
And full control possessed of each all  
else above—  
'Twas happiness to live, to simply  
breathe the air,  
Together be, together watch the  
world so fair,  
Pure innocence with each. As chil-  
dren playful grasp  
The roses blooming fresh, and thorns  
unwitting clasp.  
Ah, cruel fate! to tempt poor human  
nature so,  
And hide the quicksand's deadly path  
with roseate glow.

## THE FAIR ELENA

That dangerous road these two so far  
had entered in,  
That shadows of eternal night and  
mortal sin  
Gloomed darkly o'er their heads, pit-  
falls on either side;  
Unconscious pair—they wandered on  
without a guide.  
Fate strides with footsteps free, and  
surely overtakes  
A mortal's pace, however great the  
speed he makes.  
And happiness is but the globule's  
tinted form,  
That ruddy glows in painted color,  
rich and warm—  
As floating in the air, it, towering, up-  
ward flies,  
A radiant star. In seeming, firm as  
the eternal skies,  
One instant bright, the next 'tis gone,  
a film in air;

## THE FAIR ELENA

In darkness plunged the light and life,  
that promised fair.

Meanwhile with watchful eye Alvarez  
vigil kept—  
Suspicion rankled in his brain, and  
never slept,  
But smouldered with the inward fire,  
intense of hate,  
Soul searing burned, and vengeance's  
flood alone could sate.  
Each deed or look, though light as  
thistle-down in air,  
As weighty evidence of guilt within  
his lair,  
In mind he, raging, seized and turned  
it o'er and o'er,  
In search of deep intent—a hidden  
something more  
Than on the surface seemed. To him  
a deep design

## THE FAIR ELENA

Was borne in every glance, an influence all malign,  
Yet crafty and dissembling well, no signal gave  
Of doubt, or warning voice, that might the victim save.

Chivalrous in his faith, Hernando's utmost thought  
Was kindly deed and faithful trust to guard from aught  
That might a glooming shadow cast upon the day,  
From care to alienate and clear the thorny way  
From out the fair Elena's path.  
Within his eyes  
A haloed saint she was—an angel in disguise—  
Her casemate bower a cloistered cell—a sacred shrine.

## THE FAIR ELENA

The lady's service and the King's his  
heart entwine,  
No thought of love for her had blos-  
omed in his mind;  
The new-born soul of love, within his  
soul confined,  
No signal gave of life that would his  
honor fright,  
And scatter withering frost forever-  
more to blight.  
Elena, too, the slumberous love within  
her breast  
Not manifest to her. For coyly in his  
nest  
Young love, so newly waked, was  
stranger to her eyes,  
Yet being there, by magic changed to  
Paradise  
The arid desert of her life. And she,  
content,  
Ne'er reasoned how or why, but gave  
a glad consent

## THE FAIR ELENA

To each day's pleasure as it came, and  
careless drew  
A honeyed joy from every changeful  
hour that grew.

And so one eve, it chanced, the sun  
was newly set—  
They watched the colors fade, beyond  
the parapet  
Uprose the great round moon and cast  
abroad her rays  
In threads of light, to weave her web  
in human ways.  
A woof of much of mischief, love and  
sweetness blent,  
A spell of witching madness oft to  
lovers sent—  
For love's distilled potent and most  
intoxicate,  
When silver tipped the waves with  
moonbeams scintillate,

## THE FAIR ELENA

And Cupid's arrows dipped the sparkling cauldron in  
Envenomed are, and swifter fly, the heart to win.  
With heaving breast the greenwood tossed and gently sighed,  
As toyed the breeze with amorous kiss the swelling tide,  
Each dainty leaflet, trembling in the soft embrace,  
With quivering nerve expectant in its trysting place.  
Beneath the fortress wall a wandering minstrel sang,  
Commingling with the dreamy night, the music rang  
With tinkling mandolin, the sturdy cavalier  
Trolled forth this serenade the words and music clear:

## THE FAIR ELENA

Warily crouches the tiger,  
Fiercely watching his prey;  
Angrily glaring through thicket,  
Stealthily creeping his way.

Love the fair maiden entrances,  
Sweet sings her heart to its tune,  
Dreamily wandering the pathway,  
Silvery kissed by the moon.

Velvet the tread of the tiger,  
Soft as the silvery light;  
Ware thee the thicket, fair maiden,  
Hasten thee homeward in flight.

Flashes a shade o'er the pathway,  
Echoes a thunderous roar;  
Broken the tryst of the fair one,  
Maiden, thy love dream is o'er.

The music ceased. The singer  
strolled his distant way,

## THE FAIR ELENA

Unwitting that a warning bore his  
idle lay  
To ears that heard and eyes that saw  
their last of earth,  
For o'er them hovered death, amid the  
joy and mirth  
A ghastly night, forevermore about  
the pair,  
Enshrouding deep in gloom the sen-  
suous, moonlit air.  
Within the angle of the fort Alvarez  
stood,  
And jealous passion burned his brain  
to savage mood.  
Blue black the knotted veins upon the  
forehead rise,  
And deadly hate infuriate gleams  
within his eyes,  
As Alvarez, with stealthy steps, upon  
them creeps  
In murderous ire, as tiger, crouching  
ere he leaps—

## THE FAIR ELENA

Then close Hernando came to fair  
Elena's side,  
With bounding pulse they gazed upon  
the silver tide.  
The wanton breeze unleashed her  
wealth of ebon hair  
From out its strict confine, and float-  
ing light in air,  
With tingling touch it, veil-like, fell  
upon his face,  
And captive bound him helpless in its  
flossy grace,  
A wildering perfume, subtly, mind  
and sense unfold;  
Then burst the passion's storm, no  
more by force controlled,  
As sweeps the flood of light when  
wakes the tropic day,  
So instant light illumines their minds  
with sudden ray,  
That heart to heart in adamantine  
chain is bound;

## THE FAIR ELENA

And each within the other's soul supreme is crowned.  
One moment, then transformed,  
.. transfigured each with bliss,  
Oh! ye who drain life's wine, what vintage rivals this!  
One instant thus, and then as sudden tropic night  
Obscures the day, so vanished from their lives the light  
Of happiness. Instead, a burning sense of shame,  
Of broken vows, of mortal sin, and sullied name.  
With horror overwhelmed, the inmost soul laid bare,  
With pallid lips that could not speak, the hapless pair,  
As our first parents, from their Eden, shuddering, turned,  
As Alvarez before them sprung. And savage burned

## THE FAIR ELENA

The volumed blast of hate, in imprecations rung  
The deep-toned vengeance pouring from his blood-stained tongue,  
While helpless, mutely stand, in impotent dismay,  
These two unfortunates, as Alvarez barred the way.  
And naught Hernando found to offer in defence  
As Alvarez, Elena seized and dragged her thence,  
But like a statue stood in frozen marble fair,  
Till once again the demon came, and found him there.  
Then desolate, as closed his clang ing dungeon door,  
In agony beyond his strength, upon the floor  
He stricken fell, and blank oblivion welcome gave

## THE FAIR ELENA

The sorely beaten soul in Lethe's  
cooling wave.

The night drew on apace, and thun-  
ders distant rolled,  
The chapel bell in ghostly chimes the  
midnight tolled.

Before the altar knelt a figure robed  
in white,

In agony of suppliance bent, in  
piteous plight.

A faint and drooping girl, with out-  
stretched, pleading hands

To Mary—Mother—true to those in  
sorrow's bands,

And throbbed her heart in wildest  
ecstasy of pain

As at the mercy seat she vainly sought  
to gain

A pardon for her fault from Heaven  
so far above.

## THE FAIR ELENA

This overwhelming gulf—her guilty,  
new-found love,  
Till crushing with the weight it  
strength and sense o'ercame,  
And swooning, laid the sacrifice, her  
weary frame,  
A limp and helpless form upon the  
altar stair  
As Alvarez appeared. His bloodshot  
eyes insanely glare,  
He crossed the aisle in feverish haste  
and seized her there,  
With purpose fixed and firm, and then  
his steps retraced.  
And there, unseen of men, his lovely  
burden placed  
Within her couch of doom—a narrow  
iron cage—  
A rusted relic, left from some for-  
gotten age,  
That wed with chains an inner wall,  
and mouldering stood

## THE FAIR ELENA

An iron grave prepared, and yearning for its food,  
A spot secluded deep, within the castle wall,  
Beneath the angle of the fort and tower tall,  
Whose ponderous stones defend the outer seaward sides,  
There placed this narrow cell. A solid wall divides  
The meagre space from out the corridor's expanse.  
A hidden nook, so formed apart that only chance  
Its secret station might disclose to prying eyes.  
At either end, with fiendish art, twin cages rise,  
Enclosed within the cruel bars—that mocking grate.  
United in this living tomb, but separate,

## THE FAIR ELENA

The victims of Alvarez' wrath, scarce  
living, flung.  
Oh! Heaven forbid the deed to these  
so fair and young.  
With desperate zeal Alvarez, with one  
attendant grim,  
The rapid trowel waved above the  
fateful brim  
Of mortared brick to close the narrow  
entrance space.  
A quicksand's gulf, it rose above a  
burial place,  
A dungeon and a tomb; no ray of hope  
or light  
Could weakly pierce that massive wall,  
or chance of flight  
E'er reach the soul confined within  
such prison bounds;  
No chance to pitying ears attent their  
moans might sound;  
Silence unbroke—all hushed within  
that dismal cell,

## THE FAIR ELENA

A torture doom complete, and worthy  
fiends of hell.

What hope of heaven could ever dawn  
within the breast

Of any mortal man with such a crime  
opprest?

Oh, God! but it were pain to die by  
flood or fire,

Or chained by savage hands upon the  
funeral pyre,

On battle plain amid the charge of  
rushing host,

Or drowning, dashed by sea upon the  
rock-bound coast.

But even then the blessed sun or star-  
lit sky

A consolation bears to those about to  
die.

What thought or feeling came within  
that dreary cell?

No sound the echo wakes—no tongue  
the terrors tell—

## THE FAIR ELENA

The silence of the grave—naught else  
to human ken.  
Thus disappeared these two from  
sight of living men  
When closed the solid wall that barred  
from human sight  
Alvarez and his guilty aid to outer  
night  
Sped forth. They two went out—but  
Alvarez alone,  
Blood-stained, returned. Could death  
unshrived the deed atone,  
As slowly sinking down to reach its  
resting-place  
A ghastly murdered form, with pallid,  
sin-struck face,  
To vision lost in ooze, and mire, and  
watery way,  
In silence waiting dawn of resurrec-  
tion day?  
And Alvarez henceforth no time of  
placid sleep

## THE FAIR ELENA

Can e'er his eyelids close. Then  
grizly phantoms creep,  
The shapeless things that fiercely  
stare from out the night,  
With clutching, bony hands, impal-  
pable to sight.  
Yet ever reaching forth, the fancies  
of the mind  
That shape themselves in hideous  
dreams and helpless bind.  
The horror-stricken wretch on whom  
they sternly leer,  
Till sleep forsakes his burning eyes  
from deadly fear.  
Now drew a curtain thick of clouds  
athwart the sky,  
And moaning sighed the breeze and  
stirred the forest nigh.  
With mournful sound, as though the  
dead and buried throng  
Of those long turned to dust were  
come with ghastly tongue

## THE FAIR ELENA

Of protest 'gainst the cruel deed.  
Each, shuddering, stands  
In terror trembling, fixed, with wav-  
ing, fleshless hands,  
That vainly seek to veil the sight from  
sylvan eyes  
Of murder foul, and dastard human  
sacrifice.  
Now louder wails the wind, and pulses  
on the shore  
The waves in measured tones, a knell  
forevermore.

The hand of time has moved the dial  
space a span,  
An atom of the great profound—a  
life of man,  
And with the changing years Spain's  
flag no longer flies  
O'er San Augustine's fort and town.  
That jewelled prize  
A nation newly born, by peaceful art,  
has gained.

## THE FAIR ELENA

The fort dismantled now, its warlike  
glory waned,  
A pleasure spot is grown, in which  
to dream an idle hour.  
Its battlements are tumbling down,  
and near the tower  
A broken roof that entrance gave,  
through stones displaced,  
To curious eyes that finding then the  
secret, traced,  
Disclosed a vaulted cell, and in the  
highest part,  
Scarce room to stand erect, so planned  
with fiendish art,  
Within the fortress' solid walls that  
only time  
With steady, moving hand blazons the  
hideous crime  
And casts the light of day, through  
dust and fallen stones,  
Upon the rusted cage and slowly  
crumbling bones,

## THE FAIR ELENA

The relics of an age, they mutely witness bear,  
When darkening night spread deep its wings o'er black despair.  
Yet what is left untold though eloquent these grow,  
No ear, nor eye unsealed by sleep can ever know.  
The tide ebbs out to sea, and springs the sudden night  
Upon the day so fair, and swiftly strangles light.  
Then come there forth uncanny creatures from the wall,  
Of kind elsewhere unknown; strange birds that sight appall,  
As restless flitting round the creviced fortress gray  
Uneasy ghosts they seem, for crime condemned to stay  
And haunt from dusk to dawn the sin-accursed spot

## THE FAIR ELENA

Wherein, in times long past, their evil  
deeds were wrought;  
Creatures of night and ghosts of evil  
deeds, they creep  
About the crumbling walls, wherein  
their victims sleep,  
With cruel eyes aglare, as though with  
hidden woe  
Of never ending inward fire the por-  
tals glow  
Till gray the night becomes, then  
filled with quickening fears,  
They seek their hiding place till night  
again appears.  
While morning scatters amaranth  
upon the deep,  
With glowing kisses wakes the blush-  
ing sea from sleep,  
And wakened love and life again re-  
sume their sway,  
Secure in happier hours, that bless  
this later day.









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